New Horizons in Our Endless Search for Truth

Maeterlinck Writes a Remarkable Essay on Gambling

"It Is Just a Little Ball, Honestly Seeking the Little Red or Black Hole in Which to Go to Sleep and Having Nothing Very Much to Tell Us of a Secret Luck or Destiny Which Exists Only Within Ourselves"

I

FEW human speculations, in all the history of thought, have exceeded in interest those which concern themselves with the element of chance in our lives. Whole systems have been evolved with Chance as the basic principle; and while it can hardly be professed that our fundamental knowledge on the subject has even infinitesimally increased, after centuries of investigation, the lure remains. We are still concerned with Chance. We still breathlessly ask: Is Chance a force which can somehow be corralled and turned to definite human uses? Can we force Chance to serve our ends, work for us?

Perhaps no more fascinating consideration of the subject has ever been published than that which appears in "The Fortnightly Review" over the signature of Maurice Maeterlinck. "Of Gambling," he calls his essay; and it ponders the mysterious fluctuations of fortune which those encounter who flock to Monte Carlo. Here, for more than fifty years, he tells us, "men have obstinately forced the birth of unnatural Chance and doggedly consulted the formless and featureless god that shrouds good luck and ill within his shadow.

"Certainly," he writes—

"at these tables, as at all places where men's passions are vibrant, we are able to make interesting observations and, among other things, to behold at first hand, violently foreshortened and harshly illuminated, certain aspects of man's lifelong struggle with the unknown. The drama, which as a rule is long drawn out, projecting itself into space and time and breaking up amid circumstances that escape our eyes, is here knit together, gathered into a ball, held, so to speak, in the hollow of the hand. But, for all its speed, its abruptness of movement and its extreme compression, it remains as complex and mysterious as those which go on indefinitely. Until the ivory ball that rolls and hops around the wheel falls into its red or black compartment, the unknown which veils its choice or its destiny is as impenetrable as that which hides from us the choice or the destiny of the stars. The movements of the planets can be calculated almost to a second; but no mathematical operation can measure or predict the course of the little white ball.

"Your more skilful players, indeed, have given up trying. Not one of them any longer relies seriously on intuition, presentiment, second sight, telepathy, psychic forces, or the calculation of probabilities in the attempt to foresee or determine the fall of a destiny no larger than a hazel nut. Ordered science has failed in this; and the whole occult and magical side of human knowledge has failed likewise. The mathematicians, the prophets, the seers, the sorcerers, the mediums, the psychometrists, the spiritualists endowed with psychic receptivity who call upon the dead for assistance, all alike are blind, confounded and impotent before the wheel and before Destiny's thirty-seven compartments. Here Chance reigns supreme; and hitherto, though it all happens before our eyes, though it is ever repeated to satiety and may be held, let me say once more, in the hollow of our hand, no one has yet been able to determine a single one of its laws."

II

YET such laws seem to exist; and thousands of players have ruined themselves in following their forms or their elusive and deceptive traces. "Let us," he says, "take a bundle of those records or permanences, published at Monte Carlo, which give day by day the list of all the numbers that have come up at one of the roulette or trente-et-quarante tables. As everybody knows, these numbers are arranged in long parallel columns, the black on the left and the red on the right.

"When we look at one of these sheets, containing as a rule ten columns of sixty-five numbers each—dead and harmless ciphers now, though once so dangerous, once destructive of so many hopes and perhaps inspiring more than one disaster—we observe a tendency toward a perceptible equilibrium between the red and the black. Most often the two chances balance each other, singly or in little groups, a black, a red, two blacks, three reds, three blacks, two reds, and so on.

"When we come upon a series of five, six, seven, eight, sometimes eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve consecutive blacks, we are almost certain of finding not far away a compensating series of five, six, seven, eight, or ten reds. There is very real rhythm, a sort of breathing or a cadenced swaying to and fro of the mysterious creature we call Chance. This rhythm or balance is, moreover, confirmed by the final statistics of the day, from which we learn that, in a total of six hundred-odd spins of the ball, the difference between the black and the red very seldom exceeds twenty or thirty; and this difference is even smaller in the total for the week—that is to say, in a total of nearly five thousand spins—when it is usually reduced to a few units.

"The monster has other strange habits. We see, for instance, that it is not uncommon for a number to come up twice in succession; and it is undeniable that in each day's play two or three numbers are obviously favored, so that we may hurl our challenge to logic and declare that the more frequently a number occurs the more chances it has of reappearing. This seems to conflict with the law of equilibrium which we have remarked; but it must be observed that this equilibrium will be recovered later, that by the end of the week the differences will no longer be very great and that they will almost disappear when the month is over. The equilibrium is more slowly restored because we must multiply the number of series by eighteen and a half to reach the proportions of the even chances.

"Players note yet another law which, for that matter, is but a corollary of the former habit, but which has something curiously human about it; the chances which lag behind show a greater eagerness to regain their lost ground at the moment that follows more or less closely upon a halt, as though they had recovered their breath after a brief rest on the landing of a staircase.

"Let us add at once that it is wise to distrust these fluctuating habits and these gropings after laws. For instance, red has been known to beat black by 70 per cent in the course of a day's play. Black, on the other hand, as people still remember at Monte Carlo, one day came up twenty-nine times in succession and the second dozen twenty-eight times, without a break. Chance has not our impatient nerves; it is not, like us, in a hurry to make good its losses or to carry off its gains. It takes its time, awaits its hour, and does not trouble to keep step with our ways of life."

III

THE gambler, Maeterlinck reminds us, whatever system he adopt, is always "tossing against the bank." He has a chance, and so has the bank. Yet zero gives the bank odds against the gambler. Odds which, though apparently, zero is "a very mild tax," giving the bank, in thirty-six chances, only half a chance more than the player, are bound to prove ruinous in the end. We read:

"To escape the abruptness of a decision which, if he placed all that he possessed on the red or the black, would end the game at a single stroke, the player divides his stake, so as to be able to defy a large number of chances, hoping that, thanks to a skilfully graduated progression, he will end by lighting on a favorable series in which the gains will exceed the losses. This is the underlying principle of all the systems, which are never anything but more or less ingenious, prudent and complicated martingales. There are not, there never will be, any others, in the absence of a miracle which has not yet occurred, of an intuition which foresees what the ball will decide, or of an unknown force which will oblige it to act as a player wishes."

Players, the writer declares, hearten themselves—

"by maintaining that they have an incontestable advantage over the bank. They begin to play, they 'attack' when they like and as they like and they withdraw when they please, whereas the bank is compelled to play without stopping, to accept every stake and to meet every coup up to the limit of the maximum, which, as we know, is six thousand francs on the even chances. This advantage is a real one if the player, after winning a big sum, goes away and does not come back again. But the lucky gambler, even more infallibly than the one who has no luck, will return to the enchanted table and in so doing lose the only effective weapon that he had against his enemy.

"To choose your time for attack is but an illusory privilege, because everything, at any moment, is equally independent of past and future, equally uncertain; and you never know beforehand when the precarious and untrustworthy law of equilibrium will assert itself. After a long sequence of blacks you wager on a fine series of reds, a certain run, you would say; but no sooner have you staked your money than the series gives up the ghost and remorseless black resumes its devastating course; or else you do the opposite: you bet on black and it is red that settles down for a run.

"At whatever moment you start playing you are always fighting red against black, that is to say, one to one. Once more, the only real advantage is that you can go away when you like; but where is the gambler, whether losing or winning, who is able to get away and not return?"

IV

YET it seems as with other systems a certain science, a certain experience, a certain deftness is indispensable. Beyond all else, we are told, the prudent player—

"studies the character and temper of the table at which he takes his seat, for each table has its psychology, its habits, its history, which vary from day to day, and yet by the end of the year form a homogeneous whole wherein all temporary errors, all anomalies and injustices are compensated. The question is to know on what page of this history he should prepare to play his part. He will not learn this at once. It is of little use for him to peep at the notes and permanences of the players who have come before him. What he wants is the immediate contact, the very breath of the hidden god. But the god is soon thrilling into life, taking shape and countenance, giving a whispered hint of his intentions, speaking words of approval or condemnation; and the tragic struggle begins between the player, so infinitely small, and Chance, so enormous and omnipotent.

"Now that the battle is joined, now that the player has done what he could to summon and welcome luck, there is nothing left for him to do but wait; for luck, when all is said, will remain the supreme power that pronounces the final verdict, the formidable and inevitable unknown factor in every combination."

It would be extremely surprising, Maeterlinck admits, if this "indefatigable and exhaustive inquiry into Chance, pursued for over fifty years, had failed to yield some sort of result." And we read further:

"I am wondering, at the end of this investigation, what that result is. At the cost of an insane waste of money, time, physical, nervous and moral energy and spiritual forces, perhaps more precious still, it has taught us that Chance is, in short, Chance; that is to say, an aggregate of effects whereof we do not know the causes. But we knew as much as this before; and our new discovery is a little ludicrous.

"We have seen the shadowy appearance of certain laws or habits from which a few players appear to derive advantage, though this advantage is always precarious. But these apparent laws, which tend obscurely and uncertainly to instill a little order into Chance, are, like Chance itself, but inconsistent and ephemeral summaries of results from unknown causes. Upon the whole we have learned nothing, unless perhaps it be that we were wrong to attach greater importance to those manifestations of destiny than they possess. If we look at them more closely we find that there is nothing more behind all these catastrophes and all these mysteries of luck than the catastrophes and the mysteries which we put there.

"We link our fate to the fate of a little ball which is not responsible for it; and, because we intrust it for a moment with our fortune, our good luck or our bad, we fondly imagine that mysterious moral powers are bent on directing and ending its course at the right or wrong moment. It knows nothing of all this; and, though the lives of thousands of men depended on its fall to the right or the left of the point at which it stops, it would not care. It has laws of its own which it must obey and which are so complex that we do not even try to systematize them.

"It is just a little ball, honestly seeking the little red or black hole in which to go to sleep, and having nothing very much to tell us of a secret luck or destiny which exists only within ourselves."

"If You Only Knew What It Is to Have Faith!"

Theodore Dreiser, American Novelist, Goes Out Among Men, Questioning, Pondering, and Discovers Some Unique Answers to Age-Old Questions. He Finds One Charlie Potter, Who Has Discovered Contentment

THERE had been a discussion—argument almost.

"Yes, sir! Charlie Potter is a contented man," replied Mr. Main with convincing emphasis.

That being the case, Mr. Theodore Dreiser, American novelist, decided to look up "Charlie Potter," for, presumably, contented men are few. In "Twelve Men," Mr. Dreiser's latest work, he paints a bold portrait of this "doer of the word."

In Norwich Mr. Dreiser found him.

"Is this Mr. Potter?"

"I'm the man."

"I came up to have a talk with you."

"Will you come inside or shall we sit out here?"

"Let's sit on the step."

"All right, let's sit on the step."

He waddled out of the gate and sank comfortably on the little low doorstep, with his feet on the cool bricks below. I dropped into the space beside him and was greeted by as sweet and kind a look as I have ever seen in a man's eyes. It was one of perfect courtesy and good nature—void of all suspicion.

So Mr. Dreiser asked him if he were a contented man.

"Yes, brother," he said after a time, "I am."

This contentment came from a love of his fellowmen, he said.

To quote:

"Take a tramp, for instance, as I often have. When you begin to sum up to see where to begin you find that all he has in the world, beside his pipe and a little tobacco, is his feelings. It's all most people have, rich or poor, though a good many think they have more than that. I try not to injure anybody's feelings."

He looked at me, adds Dreiser, as though he had expressed the solution of the difficulties of the world, and the wonderful kindly eyes beamed in rich romance upon the scene.

Going Deeper

Looking further into Potter's philosophy and to quote again:

"I've been working now for twenty years or more and although I've never had more money than would last me for a few days at a time I've never wanted for anything, and I've been able to help others. I've run pretty close sometimes. Time and time again I've been compelled to say, 'Lord, I'm all out of coal,' or 'Lord, I'm going to have to ask you to get me my fare to New Haven to-morrow,' but in the moment of my need He has never forgotten me. Why, I've gone down to the depot time and time again, when it was necessary for me to go, without five cents in my pocket, and He's been there to meet me. Why, He wouldn't keep you waiting when you're about His work. He wouldn't forget you—not for a minute."

Dreiser was amazed, he admits.

"Do you mean to say that you would go down to a depot without money and wait for money to come to you?"

"Oh, brother," he said, with the softest light in his eyes, "if you only knew what it is to have faith!"

Or, again:

"What is carfare to New Haven or to anywhere to Him?"

Literally he had stood in the depot and a stranger had walked up and presented him with $10.

This contented man's wife was content, too. She had wanted for things—sometimes—but those necessary had come and she was happy, she admitted.

After all, then, what was the cornerstone of this unusual career? Dreiser wanted to know. Potter answered:

"Personal service. Churches and charitable institutions and societies are all valueless. You can't reach your fellow men that way. They build up buildings and pay salaries—but there's a better way. . . . This giving of old clothes that the moths will get anyhow, that won't do. You got to give something of yourself, and that's affection. Love is the only thing you can really give in all this world. When you give love, you give everything. Everything comes with it in some way or other."

It Depends

Still Dreiser wanted to know if there were not times when money was handy.

"Yes, when you give it with your own hand and heart—in no other way. It comes to nothing just contributed to some thing. Ah! the tangles men can get themselves into, the snarls, the wretchedness! Troubles with women, with men whom they owe, with evil things they say and think, until they can't walk down the street any more without peeping about to see if they are followed. They can't look you in the face; can't walk a straight course, but have got to sneak around corners. Poor, miserable, unhappy — they're worrying and crying and dodging one another!"

There was the time when this doer of personal service served the poor of New London during a cold winter with meals that cost a cent and a half!

These were fish dinners and Potter both caught the fish and cooked them—and the poor were warm and fed. Old clothing, too, he distributed and wore it himself among those who seemed a little ashamed.

Finally:

"You've got to change a man and bring him out of his self-seeking if you really want to make him good. Most men are so tangled up in their own errors and bad ways, and so worried over their seekings, that unless you can set them to giving it's no use. They're always seeking and they don't know what they want half the time. Money isn't the thing. Why, half of them wouldn't understand how to use it if they had it. Their minds are not bright enough. Their perceptions are not clear enough. All you can do is to make them content with themselves. And that, giving to others will do. I never saw the man or the woman yet who couldn't be happy if you could make them feel the need of living for others, of doing something for somebody besides themselves. It's a fact. Selfish people are never happy."

And Dreiser at parting adds:

"He hung by his fence, looking down upon the city. As I turned the next corner I saw him awakening from his reflection and waddling stolidly back into the house."

On Going Sour

In "The Village Feudists"—another sketch in "Twelve Men"—Dreiser finds an old, rather fanatical, religionist who goes "sour" on his home town.

The feud had left Elihu Burridge high and dry upon a social reef. He couldn't rule; he wouldn't be ruled. The shipbuilder had become a bigger man in his community than he—and Burridge was a man who hid a broken heart beneath a grim exterior.

Dreiser wanted to know about him, too.

"All sensitiveness," a sail-maker told him. "There ain't anything the matter with Elihu except that he's piqued and grieved. He wanted to be the big man, and he wasn't."

But his heart was broken notwithstanding.

"You surely can't love and refuse to forgive them at the same time," Dreiser had said once to Burridge, making a Biblical argument a veiled premise for a discussion of this strange man's standing in his own community.

"I don't refuse to forgive them," he repeated. "If John there," indicating an old man in a sun-tanned coat who happened to be passing through the store at the time, "should do me a wrong—I don't care what it was, how great or how vile—if he should come to me and say, 'Burridge, I'm sorry'—he executed a flashing oratorical move in emphasis, and throwing back his head exclaimed: 'It's gone! It's gone! There ain't any more of it! All gone!'"

Dreiser adds:

"I stood there dumfounded by his virility, as the air vibrated with his force and feeling. So manifestly was his reading of the Bible colored by the grief of his own heart that it was almost painful to tangle him with it. Goodness and mercy colored all his ideas, except in relation to his one-time followers, those who had formerly been his friends and now left him to himself."

The Poles and In Between

From The Theosophical Quarterly

PRIDE is the defective operation of a virtue, which perhaps may be defined as Humility. Vanity is its polar opposite. Every spiritual quality has its defective operation or negative aspect, and its polar opposite. A defective operation or negative aspect of a virtue is a fault. Its polar opposite is a sin.

VIRTUE	FAULT	SIN
Love	Indifference	Self-love
Loyalty	Partiality	Treachery
Courage	Timidity	Cowardice
Bravery	Recklessness	Fear
Patience	Insensibility	Irritability
Sympathy	Coldness	Cruelty

Sin is undiluted lower nature. A fault is some impulse or force of higher nature which has been distorted by lower nature. Vanity is composed wholly of lower nature. There is nothing in it anywhere that can redeem it. It is the devil and must be killed out. Pride can be purified, for it is based on a fact; vanity cannot, for it is based on delusion.

Back to Essentials

WHAT place has luxury in national economy? This is a relevant topic since the instituting of a luxury tax by the government. The following excerpt from the publication issued by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace defines the point at which necessities stop and luxuries begin:

"Luxuries should include everything not required for health, strength and efficiency of the people and not demanded as decencies by the general consensus of opinion of the whole nation. Even though one's own social set may live on a certain scale of 'conspicuous waste,' even though one has been accustomed to associating with people who form their opinions as to an individual's respectability on the basis of the display which he can make of his wealth, or the lavishness with which he can advertise his solvency, one could not properly claim that either necessity or decency required him to spend so much or to consume so many things.

"For every woman who is physically and mentally sound, even one servant is a luxury, unless she is actually engaged in other productive work which would prevent her from doing her own housework. Membership in any kind of club is a luxury to a man, even though all his particular friends and associates belong to it. But the ordinary conventional clothing and furniture of the ordinary household is a decency, even though in cases of dire necessity they might be dispensed with. Only a fraction of the human race, i. e., the Christian nations, ever use chairs, for example. They could, therefore, scarcely be called necessaries."

A Western Fable

ON THE eastern slope of the Manzano Mountains in New Mexico, says "The Savannah News," stand the ruins of an old mission church, and a few scattered walls and foundations, which bear the impressive name of Grand Quivira, and which are monuments to one of the greatest and most enduring lies ever told by the tongue of man, writes Niksah.

"The lie was started by a certain Indian back in the sixteenth century. He was found living among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico by the great Spanish explorer, Coronado. Because he was a queer, dark-looking fellow, the Spaniards called him The Turk, but in reality he was a member of another tribe of Indians, living far to the east.

"The Turk was anxious to return to his own people, so he told the Spaniards that to the east was a great land, the home of a people called the Quiviras, where was much gold and great houses. Coronado went in search of the place, taking The Turk as a guide, and found that the Quiviras were a savage tribe of wandering Indians who had no wealth whatever. He killed The Turk for having told such a monstrous lie.

"But the lie strangely persisted, in spite of all Coronado wrote and said about the true state of Quivira, and for a long time men continued to search for Quivira, with its gold and great houses. Later, these ruins in the Manzano country were supposed to be the remains of the mythical city, and treasure seekers dug all about them in the hope of finding buried gold.

"Finally, Bandelier, an astute government ethnologist, made a study of the matter, proved that the Quiviras had never been anything but a poor nomad tribe, and that the ruins were those of a mission built by the Spaniards for the purpose of civilizing the Indians."

THE APPARITION—By Paul Bonhomme

Translated by William L. McPherson

Here is a story of Verdun—a theme which will last in French fiction for generations to come. It is based on one of the many legends of that battle which have arisen and will continue to multiply. The French speak of Verdun as "an epic." It is an epic which lends itself freely and naturally to all sorts of mythical embellishments.

STRETCHED on his back in a cot in the hospital, the lieutenant kept his eyes glued on the door.

He knew that he was doomed.

Complications had followed an operation necessitated by the condition of his wound. In spite of all precautions the infection mounted. He realized that when it reached his heart all would be over.

He had been picked up within the French lines on the Douaumont Plateau—in the mass of human wreckage left there by the final assault. Our stretcher bearers make no distinctions in their bloody gleanings. For them there are only bodies which suffer under the uniforms of the wounded, whatever those uniforms may be. So this German officer was transported to the first aid station. Then he was removed to a hospital in the rear, where, from the point of view of the tender and sympathetic nurses, he became only one more patient on an ever-lengthening list.

Finally the door opened. A nurse appeared. It was the one whom he had been looking for.

As she advanced toward him the eyes of the sufferer became more importunate. When she reached his cot he said to her, in very pure French:

"I was waiting impatiently for you."

Thinking that he was in pain, she sought to quiet him by asking:

"Shall I give you another injection?"

"It isn't that, mademoiselle."

After a moment's hesitation, he continued:

"I want to tell you a secret."

The nurse raised her head with an instinctive start of protest. In the few days since she had been caring for this young officer she had noticed the smile with which he responded to each of her kindly attentions. Sometimes he had looked at her with an insistence which made her lower her eyes. And the idea that this German, before he died, was going to offer her the supreme evidence of his attachment drove the color from her cheeks.

"What is it?" she asked.

The officer, making a great effort to control himself, replied:

"What I have to tell you no Frenchman knows. It is a secret jealously guarded by the German army. If my chiefs knew that I had told it to you they would punish me severely."

"Then why do you tell me?"

Panting for breath, he answered:

"To show my gratitude, mademoiselle, for your care."

As she looked at him in a sort of stupor he gathered strength and continued:

"The Germans could never have taken Verdun."

"But," the nurse broke in, with a burst of patriotic pride, "we, too, in France have never doubted that. Our soldiers were brave enough and strong enough to defend the ancient citadel!"

"Doubtless," said the officer. "But there was something else."

Then, seeking again to master himself, he confided to her:

"A mysterious woman protects Verdun."

"A woman?"

"Yes. Please sit down. There—close by me. I can't talk very loud."

The nurse seated herself at his pillow. He went on:

"It was in the last days of February that the Crown Prince decided to launch his offensive against Verdun. My infantry division was designated to take part in the attack. On Sunday, February 20, it set out from Brabant-sur-Meuse. We were to work around that position to the east and to traverse Haumont Wood, with the village of Beaumont as our first objective.

"It was almost day. The fields were covered with snow. We followed the itinerary indicated. We were about to debouch from the woods when we perceived in the sky, in the direction of our objective, a glare which little by little defined itself, took a human form, and finally, far in the distance, assumed the somewhat vague outlines of a woman's body, which, with arms outspread and head erect, like a statue, seemed to bar the road to Verdun.

"We believed at first that it was a simple atmospheric phenomenon. It might be, we thought, an optical illusion or an effect produced by the refraction of the rays of light from the snow. Perhaps it was an accidental combination of vapors arising from the valley which created this semblance of a human form. Moreover, the image disappeared quickly with the rising of the sun.

"But if you know the tendency of my compatriots toward superstitions, you will understand the profound impression which this apparition left on our minds. Our soldiers saw in it a horoscope unfavorable to the attack—the presage of a check. We were obliged, however, to conceal our feelings. The staff of the Crown Prince was bent on taking the city. We had to march on. So we marched on. And we realized a certain advance. But presently a French counter-attack robbed us of all the ground we had gained—and gained at such a cost!"

The lieutenant made a short pause. Then he resumed:

"Next day we had to retire to Fosses Wood in order to reconstitute the division. The order to move again arrived that evening. It directed us to go to reinforce, in the direction of Ornes, the contingents which were advancing toward Fort de Douaumont.

"In the interval the weather had changed. The sky, at first clear, became overcast. Big clouds scudded over our heads. As we took up our march in the silence of the night a comrade suddenly said to me, pointing to the horizon:

"'Look there!'

"I raised my eyes and saw the image once more. The woman in white had appeared again in the heavens. With her outstretched arms she seemed to close the route to Verdun, saying to us:

"'You shall not pass!'

"Our troops could fight with fury and exhaust themselves in superhuman efforts. But they understood that they could never win a victory over that mysterious power.

"To overcome the effect produced by the apparition the intervention of the superior officers was required. These ran along the lines, revolver in hand, threatening to shoot down like dogs the superstitious who pretended to draw an augury from what they had seen.

"Nevertheless each man retained his own impression."

The nurse profited by a new pause which the dying man was forced to make to ask him:

"And you attribute the resistance of our soldiers to the occult influence of that apparition?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Without daring to avow it, we were all convinced of that fact. However, the Crown Prince wouldn't let go. Wishing to take the city at any price, he sent division after division against it. Fresh troops came to fill the gaps in our ranks. We arrived in sight of Fort de Douaumont.

"As we moved to the assault and mounted the slopes, the French searchlights illumined the sky. Suddenly their rays revealed to us against the darkness the same white woman, more luminous than ever, extending her arms, like wings, as if to take the ancient fortress under her protection. Soon afterward a salvo from the French batteries swept away three-quarters of my men. It was then that I fell.

"That is what I wanted to tell you, mademoiselle, before I died. It was the triple appearance of the woman in white above Verdun which made us lose confidence. That is why every German soldier repeats secretly (if he spoke it aloud he would be court-martialled), 'We shall never take the city.'"

He was at the end of his strength. A last gleam of vitality shone in his eyes. Then he dropped off into slumber, never to wake again.